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MONKEYIN' AROUND
WITH **BUICHI**
Our candid interview with
SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA
creator Buichi Terasawa

MANGA FEATURE
X/1999 BY CLAMP



My adventures as an A-Girl.

Although I've probably mentioned it any number of times at conventions or on the Net, I don't think I've ever talked much in ANIMERICA about my experiences working for **SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA** creator Buichi Terasawa when I was living in Japan.

Actually, to be technical, the company I was working for was Terasawa's management company, the all-girl publicity/marketing firm A-Girl. Founded and presided over by the stylish Junco Ito (who gave me the job), and located in Tokyo's fashionable "Daikanyama" area, at A-Girl I would come in once or twice a week and translate publicity flyers for Terasawa-sensei's animated releases (at the time, we were working on the **COBRA** LD Box Set), handle publicity for his overseas personal appearances (including his visit as Guest of Honor to Anime Expo '92), and occasionally, even though she speaks excellent English, go out with Junco on high-falutin' business meetings and interpret (it's funny how much worse her English would get the more she didn't want to do business with someone).

Mainly, tho', I was obliged to attend countless lunches, dinners, and events on A-Girl/Terasawa's tab, all of which I paid for, I suppose you could say, by acting as "talking monkey" for the company. You see, although it's far from being true of *all* Japanese, it's a sad fact of life that most of the people there don't expect foreigners to be able to converse in Japanese, much less be up on all the bad words and trendy OL ("Office Lady") slang I picked up from the other A-Girls.

It's almost like the more Japanese you speak, the weirder they think you are, and I guess that made me pretty weird, especially given my stated preference for the works not of **COBRA** or **KABUTO**'s Buichi Terasawa, but **CAPTAIN HARLOCK** or **GALAXY EXPRESS**' Leiji Matsumoto ("Imagine that, a blue-eyed *gaijin* liking that old-fashioned Matsumoto," they'd say, shaking their heads in bewilderment). But hey, if I had to be a talking monkey, I was determined to be the *best* darn talking monkey in Tokyo, and I know I earned my keep if only by

chattering brightly with the guests Junco and Terasawa would take out the blue-eyed blonde, *pera-pera gaijin* to entertain.

People have asked me from time to time how it was that I, a woman with her own admittedly outspoken opinions about sexism and discrimination, could deal with working with an artist like Terasawa. *What is it with him and those butts!?* they'd whisper in a shocked tone. *Doesn't it bother you?*

Actually, no, it—they—don't. Why would they? As an artist, Terasawa is a man who happens to admire the female derrière. As you'll soon be able to tell for yourself in this month's cover story, he's an artist who makes no bones about what he likes and what he doesn't. I admire that kind of honesty. Also, to be frank, I appreciate the fact that the women in Terasawa's manga are *women*, realistically proportioned and zaftig in all the right places (especially in the, uh, rear). It's always been the childlike—yet otherwise grossly endowed—prepubescents in anime who give me the willies, and so in that sense, Terasawa's "womanly women" are actually sort of refreshing.

This isn't to say that Terasawa's female characters should be taken as some sort of model for female empowerment; I could do without those motorcycle handles sticking out from the shoulders of one woman on that cover for **MIDNIGHT EYE GOKU**, and (similar to Kei and Yuri of Takachiho's **DIRTY PAIR**), for women who live such lives of action-packed danger, they sure don't wear much. But then again, I don't expect Terasawa movies or **DIRTY PAIR** movies or even 007 movies to echo my own ideas of femininity and gender and workplace equality; I make up my own mind on that. And it's not as though even Terasawa's more-realistic-than-the-average-babe babes are supposed to be *real*—they're *fantasy*, and they're supposed to *stay* that way.

In other words, I don't see why Terasawa should be held to any higher standard of political correctness than any other manga artist. As an artist, Terasawa is a man who loves women, and it shows. (Boy, does it show.)

I just wish Junco would stop telling the people we have dinner with (as she still likes to tease me, even today) that *I* was the blue-eyed and blonde model for those butt shots.

Trish

Trish Ledoux
Editor

